

The Truth About Tongues, Part 4

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 14:26–40

Code: 1874

Take your Bible, if you will, and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 14; and we're going to close out this chapter today as we look at the final section from verses 26 to verse 40. And we can take a large chunk of it, because it's very simple, very straightforward, practical information; and I trust that the Spirit of God will use it to be very, very helpful to us all. First Corinthians chapter 14, and we're going to be looking at verses 26 through 40, the last in our discussion of the truth about tongues. When we come back in a few weeks, after I've been away, we'll get into the tremendous truths of the fifteenth chapter and begin to ascend that great mountain about the resurrection.

Now as we have noted earlier in our study, the key to this chapter is the word "edification" or "edify." In this chapter, it appears in many, many ways. In many, many ways, the form of edification is used, its actual word, and in other cases it is alluded to. You'll remember that in verse 3 it talks about edification; and in verse 4, edifying the church; and in verse 5, "that the church may receive edifying;" and in verse 12, "that the church may be edified;" and in verse 19, "that I might teach others also." And in verse 26 comes the sum of it all, "Let all things be done unto edifying," – the end of verse 26.

So this is the thought that is the emphasis of the entire chapter, that when the church comes together – and, incidentally, all the way from chapter 11 to the end of 14, he is referring to the assembly of the church when it comes together in corporate worship. But he is saying that when the church comes together, the primary point is that they be edified.

Now I want to talk to you for just a minute or two about the word "edification." The Greek word *oikodomeō* in the Greek verb form, or *oikodomē* in the noun, comes from two words: *oikos*, which is a word that means house, and *demō*, which means to build. And so the word is to build a house or a house builder.

Edification then is to build up. That is the term that is used here. The word is translated five times in the same phrase in the New Testament. Five times there is the phrase "the stone which the builders rejected, the same has become the head of the corner," and it's a metaphor picturing Christ. But the word used there for builder, in all five cases, is a form of this word *oikodomé* or edify.

So in a spiritual sense it means to build up, like a person would start with a foundation and build a house. So the church has as its intention and design, the building up of the saints into full completeness. It means, spiritually, to promote spiritual growth, to develop the character of the believer to the place of real maturity.

Now this then is the major element of the church. We are together to be edified. Evangelism may take place, but that is a sidelight. Edification is the issue. Beyond that, beloved – and I only remind you of this because I'm sure you're aware of it – it is the responsibility of every individual believer to be busy about edifying the other believer.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 in verse 11, a simple word comes to us, and this is what it says: “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another.” So it is the task of the people to edify. It is not just the task of the preacher or the leader. It is all of our tasks to edify each other.

Now it is the task of the leader to do it as well. In Ephesians chapter 4 in verse 11, “He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some teaching pastors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry,” – ultimately – “for the edifying of the body of Christ,” – that it might be built up. So the leadership and the people are together involved in building each other up to spiritual maturity. This is our calling. This is our God-given responsibility. This is our divine mandate. This is that which God seeks as the expression of His will in the church.

Now this presupposes that we are never to act selfishly. We are never to be concerned about our own things, about our own successes, about our own glorification, about even our own edification. We are to be lost in the edifying of each other. In Romans 15:2, it says “Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.” And then as an example, it says, “For even Christ pleased not Himself.”

“Christ did not come to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Christ did not seek that which would be the most beneficial to Him, but that which would be the most beneficial to others. And that is exactly what we are enjoined to do. We have a responsibility before God to edify each other.

Now that’s one reason why 1 Corinthians 14:2 points out an error rather than emphasizing a truth when it says to the Corinthians, “By what you are doing, you are not speaking unto men” – and that’s what you should be doing, edifying each other.” And verse 4: “You are edifying yourself, and that is wrong.” It is a wrong kind of self-edification. The Bible never calls on us to edify ourselves, but to edify each other. So we are together for the purpose of building each other up.

Now that involves several things. First of all, it involves a right attitude. I’ve got to have that kind of spirit, or that kind of attitude, or that kind of commitment that Paul talks about in Romans 14:19. He says, “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things with which one may edify another.” In other words, he says, “look, pursue the thing that will build up somebody else.”

Don’t exercise your own liberty. Don’t say, “Well, I have every right to do this; I’m under grace. Well, I don’t care what anybody thinks; I’ll do this. Or I’ll seek my own self-glorification. Or I’ll preach this sermon so they’ll think I’m really something, so that I can make a name for myself. Or I’ll do this and that for my own good.” You see, when you do that, you have violated the right attitude, which is to “seek that with which you should edify one another,” Romans 14:19. So it demands the right attitude.

It also demands the right kind of tool. If you’re going to edify each other, there’s only one tool and that is the Word of God. Second Timothy 3:16 says that it is the Word of God which is able to build you up and to make you perfect or complete. And so then we are responsible to have an attitude that seeks the other’s good; and the method is to have the Word of God that we can teach each other. And I think we have to recognize a certain sense of patience to let God do His work in His own time. And so then we are committed to edifying. We meet together to edify.

You say, “But what happens with evangelism? Well, how do we reach out if all we do is edify the

saints?" Well, it's very easy to see the answer to that if you look at Acts 9:31. Even if you don't look at it, I'll read it to you. Acts 9:31 says this: "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified;" – all right, the churches were doing what they should have been doing; they were being edified or built up to maturity. Now watch – "and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were" – what? – "multiplied."

You see, growth is a result of edification. As the church is built up, it will reach out, and evangelism will be a by-product. So we meet together to be edified, beloved. We meet together to be taught the Word of God. We meet together to be exposed to God's truth in a way that it will cause us to grow to maturity. So edification is the issue in the church.

Now this was the issue in the early years of the church, but this was not what was happening in Corinth. In Corinth, the whole procedure of edification had come to a screeching halt. Edification was non-existent in the Corinthian church because of the confusion and the disorder with which that church was functioning. And so in the fourteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul is trying to call a halt to the perversions, to call a halt to the counterfeit, to call a halt to the confusion, and bring the Corinthians back to a system of order that would grant them edification.

Now you'll remember that in the first twenty-five verses of our study, which we've done already, Paul has detailed some doctrine about tongues and prophesying. He has laid out some of the principles relative to how these things should function, to what they are in terms of purpose and position, and he has clearly given us some theological definitions. And now beginning in verse 26, he builds on theological definition with practical exhortation. In other words he says, "Since this is true of these gifts, this is the way you should act."

Now I would hasten to add this footnote. If you've been at Grace very long, you know that we've talked about this. But if you're rather new, maybe you haven't heard this. Let me remind you of it. The Bible, particularly the New Testament Epistles, never asks for behavior without first postulating a reason; and the reason is always a theological truth. In other words, because this is so about God, this is how you should act, is pretty much the way the Bible goes.

In Romans chapter 1 through chapter 11 you have theology. There's nothing required of you; there's nothing asked of you; there's nothing exhorted of you. But finally after eleven chapters of solid doctrine you come to 12:1, and it says, "Wherefore, brethren, present your bodies a living sacrifice." And from 12 to 16 of Romans it says, "Do this, do this, do this, do this," – on what basis? – "because of the mercies of God," – listed in 1 to 11. So the Bible always enjoins behavior on the basis of doctrine. Paul has then given us twenty-five verses of doctrine in 1 Corinthians 14, and now he's going to give us a remaining area of exhortation in response to that doctrine.

Now we've shared with you two points in the chapter: the position of tongues, which was secondary; the purpose of tongues, which was as a sign; and now the procedure, the procedure for tongues and some other things, which is to be systematic. And he lays out a very systematic procedure by which the worship of the church is to function.

Now let's look at it by first examining verse 26. This is a fascinating insight into the Corinthian mess. This is what would happen when you attended church on a given Sunday morning in Corinth. "How is it then, brethren – I mean after all that I've just said to you about confusion and chaos and madness

in your assembly – how is it then, brethren, that when you come together, every one of you has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation?” Stop there for a minute. “How is it, knowing what you know about the foolishness of confusion, that all of you are doing all of these things all at the same time, all in the same place at the same hour?”

Now this is not calling for them to do this, this is detailing for them what they are doing. It’s incredible that that much chaos could be going on. Everybody was vying for the preeminence and the prominence, everybody was using his gift; and those who were counterfeiting and using non-existent gifts in pagan ways were thrown into the mishmash so that you had something like the United Nations, only everybody standing up, shouting out speeches in his own language. Nobody could have ever been edified at all. In fact, unbelievers would have concluded that they were out of their minds.

Now let’s see what they were doing. Verse 26: “When you come together” is a phrase that indicates the church in its assemblage – that is when it comes together as we are now for its corporate time of fellowship. “When you come together, when you all gather together, the whole church” – verse 23 says – “comes together, every one of you hath a psalm.”

Now when we see the word “psalm,” we think of the Psalms, the Old Testament Psalms, and that’s fine. And that may have been true; some of them may have had a Psalm they wanted to read. But the word in the Greek really means a song, a song. In fact, literally, it means a song sung to the accompaniment of an instrument. So what you had here was everybody singing a solo at the same time.

Now imagine, imagine. You had absolute chaos there. Anybody and everybody who wanted to sing a solo just started to sing. And you may have had somebody plucking along some stringed instrument with him, or blowing some flute. And can you imagine the cacophony of Corinthian chaos that would have produced? It’s certain for one thing: they didn’t have any music director. You know, that’s a problem, I suppose.

I heard Dr. Criswell said that one time there were so many people in his church who always wanted to sing solos, that in order to avoid the Corinthian problem he decided to have once every six months, solo night. And everybody who wanted to sing a solo picked out one verse of anything they wanted to sing, and they just paraded them across the platform one at a time, all in order, and they sang their verse and left. Well, in Corinth, they all stood up and sang their verses together, only not together.

Now psalms were a common part of Christian worship – songs and hymns and spiritual songs the Bible talks about. And the ministry of music is not something added later to the church, you find the ministry of music from the very first time the church began to meet in the New Testament. That’s always been a part of Christian experience, singing; and it was always a wonderful part. But in Corinth it became a point of pride, and everybody was out-singing everybody else; and what a mess.

Now if that isn’t bad enough, “Every one of you has a doctrine.” That simply means a teaching or a lesson. Everybody who wanted to exercise the gift of teaching, everybody who thought he was a would-be teacher just stood up in his own little corner and started giving his lesson. And over the din of 150 people singing a solo, there were another 150 giving a lesson. And they were laying it on the

church as to whatever they felt was their thing that they had to hear; and so you have to add to the cacophony this.

And then the next one in the Greek text list is “hath a revelation.” And then there were people who were standing up and saying, “Ah, thus saith the Lord,” and proclaiming some great supposed revelation they were having over the tops of the people trying to teach their lesson, over the tops of the people trying to sing their song.

On top of that you had some people with a tongue. There were others who were standing up speaking with the gift of languages, legitimately, but out of order in the wrong place – that is the true gift in a wrong expression. And there were others mumbling gibberish. You add that to the chaos; and on top of that, there were all kinds of people who were interpreting whatever was going on, and fighting and arguing about what interpretation was right. And this was the order of worship in the Corinthian church. Can you imagine why unbelievers came in and said, “They’re out of their minds. What kind of craziness is this”? That’s exactly what was going on.

A footnote on verse 26: “Hath a tongue.” I told you that when tongue appears in the chapter in a singular form, earlier in the chapter in the first twenty-five verses, it had reference to the false gift, to gibberish, which couldn’t be plural. Here it could have reference also to the true gift, because it’s simply singling out, “One of you has a tongue.” It could be translated, “One of you has a language, the true gift; or one of you has gibberish, a counterfeit.” But the idea of its singularity is demanded because the subject is singular, “One of you.”

And the same is true in verse 27 as we shall see. So that doesn’t do any violation to our premise that where it appears in the plural, it is the true gift; in the singular it is false. We would say, where it is in the singular demanded by a single subject, it could be either true or false.

So anyway, you have all this going on; and what a chaotic thing. And Paul calls a halt to it in verse 26. He says, “Let all things be done unto edifying.” In other words, this is the key statement. This is the basic thing: “Look, the way to resolve this whole confusion is to edify, to build up.”

Now he’s going to say here’s how. Four things come to his mind, four things brought by the Holy Spirit to order the structure of the Corinthians. And this is so very important, and so intensely practical.

Now watch. First of all, he says, “In order to edify, we must follow a procedure for the gift of languages.” Verse 27, let’s look. Here comes the first feature. “If any man” – and, again, you have a singular incident here – “speak in an unknown tongue.”

Now let me mention: King James adds “unknown” here. I think that this is the one time they added it and they shouldn’t have, because I do think he’s talking about the true gift. And the reason it’s singular is because he is saying, “If any one man speaks in a language.” Again, a singular subject demands a singular form verb and a singular object; and so any single person speaking a single language.

And the second reason I believe it has to be the true gift here is because Paul would never regulate gibberish. Gibberish was to be totally eliminated. He would only regulate the true gift. So if any man

speaks a language, somebody uses the true gift – we're just assuming that the false gift is out. "If any man speaks with a language, let it be by two or at the most, by three." Now let's stop there. There is principle number one: This gift is to be regulated.

Now, beloved, let me mention this. Like every gift that has ever been given by God, they are subject to the control of the possessor. The Holy Spirit never does anything through somebody who is out of control, who is flipped out, slain in the Spirit, bowled over, rolling on the floor, spaced out or whatever. The Spirit of God ministers the gifts of the Spirit, even in apostolic times, in a time of controlled behavior, not out of control, like the pagans. These were not pagan ecstasies, out of the control of the individual; these were the gifts of the Spirit, and they were ministered when people were in control. Consequently, they can be regulated. Consequently, principles of use can be applied that the people can respond to.

Now the people with the real gift of languages, maybe somebody in the congregation would let them know that there was an unbelieving Jew there, and that that unbelieving Jew spoke a certain foreign language. And that person would look around and he would say, "And there's an interpreter here as well." And so in the right place at the right time, the one with the gift of languages would speak that language, a language unknown to him, but known to that Jewish unbeliever present. Therefore, the message would reach that Jewish person, the interpreter would interpret it for the edification of the congregation, and it would be used in its proper way. But it was to be used under control.

And he says here, first limiting factor, "Never more than two, or at the very outside, three." It was a gift reserved for those special times when an unbelieving Jew was there, those special times when an interpreter was there, those special times, and those alone; and never should it occur more than three in any one given time. That's the limit.

Now, beloved, I would just add this. This is not true today in the Charismatic tongues session. They do not have such limitations. They do not limit them on the basis of an unbelieving Jew being present, they do not limit them on the basis of them being a legitimate language, and they do not limit them to two or three in most cases. Now some may; but in most cases that is not true of those who engage in tongues sessions. And so, you see, what you have today is so much of the Corinthian problem all over again that ignores these basic features.

Secondly, the second principle – two or three is the limiting principle. Secondly, "and that by course." The Greek means in turn, or in order, or in sequence. The Corinthians were involved in a simultaneous expression where everybody was doing it all at the same time – as I've pointed out. That is forbidden. And that is precisely, again, what you see so frequently in Charismatic tongues meetings today: everybody speaking in tongues all at the same time.

Have you ever noticed sometime when you turn on a program on the television and you see them all begin to pray, that they all begin to pray at the same time, and they all begin to pray together? In fact, that's just normal procedure in almost all Charismatic churches, to pray all at the same time. And various people will go into their tongues language, all simultaneous, all in direct violation of 1 Corinthians 14:27; but exactly what the Corinthians were doing.

In fact, the other night I was watching channel 40, and Dwight Thompson got on there, and he was preaching at some big rally somewhere. And he was getting the people all worked up and stuff into

this whatever it is that they get them into. And he was saying, "Boy, I was at a meeting the other night," – and he said – "700 to 800 people were slain in the Spirit;" – and there was hallelujahs and all that kind of stuff, and they were beginning to wave their arms – "700 to 800 were slain in the Spirit and they fell right out flat. God knocked them flat." And he said, "I wish all 2,000 of you would get zapped the same way." And he said, "That same night, 1,500 people began to speak in tongues."

And I said to myself, "Yikes, 1,500 people is only 1,497 too many." And not only that, two or three and only in order, not at the same time. It makes no sense. I mean this is here, it's here, you know, you don't have to be too intelligent. I figured it out.

Verse 27. Now I want to show you something that everybody kind of misses. At the end of verse 27 comes a third principle: "Let one interpret." Now I want to emphasize something that the Greek emphasizes. The Greek emphasizes the word "one" by putting it in there emphatically in the Greek form. The word is there, the ace is there in the text: "Let one interpret," – not two, not five, not seven, not fourteen: one. Why? Because in the Corinthian church you had a great big hassle going on, everybody wanting to gain the preeminence by giving the interpretation. So there was a fight about whose interpretation was right. So he says, "I'll settle that: two or three at the most, always in sequence, and only one is allowed to interpret." That sort of settles it.

You say, "What if there's no interpreter?" Verse 28, here's the fourth principle: "If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God." If you've got the gift and an unbelieving Jew is there, and that would be the right place and the right time to use it, but you look around and there's no interpreter there, meditate. Just sit there and meditate.

Why? You say, "Why? It could be a great evangelistic tool." Yes. But if there's nobody there to translate, then it has no capacity to do what? Edify the church. And the purpose for the church's meeting is to be edified; and that's primary, so you just drop it.

Listen, when you have 1,500 people all speaking in tongues, you know who gets edified? Nobody. You say, "But it's self-edification." Yeah, and that's exactly what's forbidden in the assembly of the church. Nobody gets edified.

So if there's no interpreter, you know what that teaches me? Watch this. This is a good point. This teaches me that they knew who had the true gift of interpretation. And if he wasn't there, there was no alternative but to be quiet. They knew who had the true gift; and if he wasn't there, you just were quiet.

There never is a case of tongues ever anywhere in the Bible that is not understandable to somebody. And if such a case should even present itself in the church, it's X'ed out right there: "Be quiet if there's no interpreter. Just sit there and meditate. Talk to God and talk to yourself, and have a nice time. Just don't say anything out loud."

So I'd say that regulates tongues pretty well, and probably would end 95 percent of the current movement if it weren't ended already by the fact that tongues had ceased. What you have today, you see, beloved, is Corinth all over, don't you. It's the same thing again. It's the same thing: everybody doing it all at the same time, nobody interprets. And that doesn't matter, they do it anyway. That's just Corinth all over again.

Now, secondly, he has the procedure for prophesying. You know, we might think that the gift of prophesying is such a great, grandiose, exalted gift in the chapter that it never fell into abuse. Believe me, it did. So he has to regulate that too in verse 29. And here he hits the gift of prophesying, which was so very vital in those days. And he wants to regulate this because, apparently, there were people jumping up all over the place and saying they had a word from the Lord, and they wanted to proclaim a proclamation, and they wanted to give a good statement from God, and they wanted to preach a great truth. And so you had this stuff going on all over the congregation. And in order to bring it into some kind of order so that people could be edified, Paul writes some procedure for this. And there are four principles here as well.

Verse 29, number one: "Let the prophets speak two or three." Same principle: never more than three. One is great, two is okay, three is okay, and that's it.

Now, you say, "Who are the prophets? Are these Old Testament prophets?" No, these are New Testament prophets, from *prophēmi*, to speak before. They were the men who spoke before the people. They were those who stood up to declare God's message.

They spoke in two ways: they spoke revelation, that is direct revelation from God, direct revelation, never been given before for the life of the church; and they spoke what I call reiteration, that is they repeated a message given by the apostles, a message already received which they just preached in a manner not unlike what I do. And so there could be direct revelation or there could be just this reiterating something already revealed. And the church service apparently was structured so that one, or two, or at the most, three, could take their time to be the ones who spoke God's message.

They were foundational, incidentally, and we don't find any prophets later in the church. In fact, when Paul writes the Epistles to set the churches in order – 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus – he never mentions prophets. He simply talks about elders, and presbyters, and deacons, and bishops, and deaconesses. And he's referring to pastors there, and deacons and deaconesses and elders. That's all he ever talks about, because prophets passed away with the passing of the apostolic age; they were a unique group.

Ephesians 2:20 says, "They were given for the foundation of the church," and they belong to that time. And so they were to speak God's message. Sometimes they had prepared the message and they spoke out of that preparation. On other occasions, they literally received a direct revelation from God without any preparation, and they spoke. Either way, they were to speak, but never more than two or three. Why? Because anything more than that would be chaotic, and you'd have a fight on your hands to see who got to stand up and speak.

Second principle in verse 29: "Let the others judge." "The others" refer to the other prophets. The other prophets were to sit in the front there and sit beside the one speaking and to evaluate the truth of what he was saying. It might well be that these had, what is in chapter 12, verse 10, called the gift of discernment. But they could discern whether something was of God or not of God, and so they were there to evaluate the truth of the message. People just couldn't stand up and speak, and nobody evaluate it.

That's the problem, see, in the charismatic situation today. You've got a guy who stands up in a

church and he says, "I have a gift of prophecy and a revelation from God," and he goes, "brrrrrr," across, and he gives this revelation. And one writer that I was reading in doing the book, said, "We know when that happens that it is either of God or it is not."

Well, what is the criteria? Well, the criteria in that day was that there were men of God, divinely granted with the ability to discern a true from a false revelation. And, you see, it had to be that they did it, because there was no written word by which to do that.

Today, we don't need any more revelations; the whole revelation is here. That's the whole point. And today, when these people have what they claim are new revelations, they're in real trouble, because they don't know whether they're from God or not. That's why you better best stop with the last part of the book of Revelation and leave it. Even the concordance and the maps are not inspired, in case you didn't know that.

So they didn't have any elders in the church at Corinth. Did you know that? They didn't have any pastor teachers as far as we know; none are ever indicated. Didn't have any leaders that we know as leaders in the pastoral epistles and for the life of the church, such as we have, elders and pastor teachers. They had these prophets, who were for that foundational time. And, of course, 1 Corinthians was very early written.

All right, let's go to a third principle. First principle: Two or three and that's all; the others had to evaluate to make sure it was of God; and they were given, no doubt, the gift of discernment to do that. And then we find in verse 30 – this is a most interesting principle: "If anything be revealed to another that sits by," – another one of the prophets sitting by – "let the first hold his peace."

Now here we have a most interesting thing. Here's a guy up there, and he's got his message prepared, and he's up there giving it. But all of the sudden, God gives a new revelation. And as soon as one of those other prophets receives from God a new revelation, he pulls the tunic of the guy speaking, and he says, "Hey, I got a new revelation," number one has to sit down, because a new revelation takes precedence over reiterating something already given. God has a special word for the church.

Now, beloved, this reinforces a point that I've been trying to make all along, and sometimes people argue with me about it, and that is I don't believe – some people say, "Well, the prophets only spoke new revelation." No, I don't think so. I think they spoke revelation or reiteration; and I think here is one of the strongest proofs. Here is somebody who is up there proclaiming; but when another one gets a new revelation, he has to sit down. So it is very reasonable to see that some received new revelation on occasion, while others were simply reiterating a message that was no less from God but was not a fresh new revelation for the moment. So number one had to sit down; and it changed the order a little bit.

Now fortunately we don't have that today, so don't get up in the middle of my sermon and say, "Hold it. Sit down, MacArthur. I got a new revelation." I'm going to say, "Well, listen, sit down. I just got a new one just since you got your new one, and mine says that 1 Corinthians," – this whole situation isn't for today. No, you see, you can't stand.

In fact, I remember when I was in Jerusalem at a Communion service and Richard Halverson was

preaching on the Mount of Olives. We were having a great time. And some guy got a revelation he said. And he stood up and he says, "I have a revelation from God. Thus saith the Lord," and he went on about some stuff. "God is going to damn this place, and oh," – and it really just was out of place. So some dear people came and took him out.

This is not the age for that. You see, if it isn't here, it isn't revelation from God. So, you see, in those days while God was giving revelation and He wanted it to get through, there just had to be a little notification to number one fellow, who sat down, while number two got up and gave the revelation.

Now they're going to say, "But, oh, I don't know if we can do this, Paul. This is pretty tough. Oh, we get under the power, see, and it just comes out. I can't control it. I get slain," – or whatever – "it just comes out."

And so in verse 31, he says, "Look, you may all prophesy one by one," – that's the fourth principle – "so that all may learn and all may be comforted." And listen to this: "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." If you're a true prophet, you can control this thing. See, that's the point. You know, the true gift is never functioning in some kind of pagan ecstasy, never. The true gift functions always, as all gifts do, under the control of the individual.

So he's given some pretty simple principles. Number one, two or three; number two, the others judge; number three, sit down if there's a new revelation; and number four, one by one in sequence, not all at the same time. Why? The purpose is always the same: that all may learn and all may be comforted. The edification of the church is the issue. And nobody gets edified in all kinds of disorder and chaos.

And he says, "Don't you give me any long line about the fact that you're out of control. The spirits" – and, incidentally, the word "spirits" is the same word translated in 14:12 by the term "spiritual gifts." "Your gifts are under your control," he says. You don't operate flipped out. That's not the way it is.

And then he sums it up with what I think is one of the most beautiful truths here, verse 33, the first half of the verse: "For God is not a God of confusion, but a God of peace." Stop right there. Now, listen, beloved, this is the key to the whole chapter. This is my message. Listen: the service of the church should manifest the character of God. Do you see that? Boy, what a great thought.

"When we come together" – Paul says – "we should, by the order, and the beauty, and the dignity, and the system, and all that is a part of our service, be manifesting a God whom we serve. And our God is not a God of confusion; and our God is a God of peace. And when somebody comes to your church, he sees confusion and fighting for preeminence, and he concludes that you have a confused, angry, fighting God," see.

I'm sure there are people who see what goes on in some of the charismatic chaos today and say, "Boy, their God must really be a mess." God is a God of order, and God is a God of dignity, and God is a God who functions systematically for results, not chaotically for feelings. And God is to be made manifest in the worship of His church.

People will say sometimes, "You know, I came to your church and it wasn't what you said. It was just what I could sense about the whole service." I hope that's true. I hope that what you sense when you

hear the magnificent beauty of the music of the choir is that God is a God of harmony. I hope when you see the sort of gentle beauty of a simple building, you see the beauty and the design and the symmetry of God. And I hope when you hear that which edifies you, you know that God is a God who wishes to give instruction. And I hope when you sense a warm and a passionate heart that you sense that God is a God who cares, see. And I hope when you touch the lives of the people sitting around you, you know that God is a God who feels and breathes and cares about you, and is sensitive.

You see, that's what God wants in the fellowship of His church to be made manifest: His nature. And the chaotic situation at Corinth could only radiate a God of frenzy. And I'm afraid much is true today in doing the same.

Then he turns to one other category of instruction for procedure; this is procedure regarding women. So this is a special message to the ladies. Very simple; middle of verse 33. And actually the middle of verse 33 should be attached to verse 34. It reads this way: "As in all churches of the saints, let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

Now, you say, "Well, how did this get in here?" Well, you see, just now and then, the Lord just has to reemphasize this. And in the Corinthian assembly it needed it, because the women were leading the parade in this seeking for the showy gifts; and women were usurping the place of the men; and women were not being silent and submissive in the church, they were bursting out and trying to take over. And so he says in verse 33 – and there are many reasons why it should be attached to verse 34, which I'm not going to go into now. Suffice it to say that the great sweeping theological truth of verse 33 is not connected to the statement "as in all churches of the saints."

"Well, that doesn't make sense." "God is not a God of confusion but of peace, period, not just in the churches of the saints." So that ties to the next one. But he's saying, "Look." People say, "Well, you know, that stuff in Corinthians being about the women keep silence: that was just a Corinthian problem, that was just a cultural thing, see, just trying to accommodate Corinthian culture."

Well, in case you think that, verse 33 says, "as in all churches of the saints. Let the women keep silence in the church." That isn't a Corinthian cultural issue, that's everywhere in the church to be the standard. Here are these women speaking in tongues, and interpreting, and singing their songs, and prophesying, and usurping the authority; and Paul singles them out. Not that men were not equally guilty; men were guilty of all these things. But he reminds the women that they are to take the place of submission and silence in the public service of the church.

Beloved, again, it is so fascinating to me that in the Pentecostal churches and the Charismatic churches, women frequently, in fact, almost historically in Pentecostal churches, have been ordained in the ministry. The first woman who ever got the baptism and spoke in tongues was – the first person, I should say, was a woman. And all the way from Aimee Semple McPherson to Kathryn Kuhlman and everybody in-between and since, women. It's amazing to me also that every cult that's been spawned out of Christianity, with few exceptions, has been spawned by a woman when women usurp that role.

Now, I'm not denigrating women; I married one. And, you know, I have no disillusionment about that. And I know God has gifted them in marvelous ways. And many of them have wonderful gifts of teaching and so forth, and proclaiming God's Word. But it is not to be exercised in the mixed assembly of the church when it comes together. That's what Paul is saying. That belongs to men.

You say, "Oh, but that's a Corinthian problem. That was just cultural." No. You'll notice it says, "They are not permitted to speak," – verse 34 – "but are commanded to be under obedience, because it says so in the law." What law? The law of God, the Pentateuch, Genesis 3:16, which says, "He shall rule over thee." From the very beginning, the man was given the authority over the woman.

In 1 Timothy chapter 2 in verse 11, "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. I permit not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. The reason is not because now we've got a culture in Ephesus or a problem in Timothy's town, but because Adam was made first, and because Eve sinned." In other words, "This is a divine design from the beginning. You can't acculturate it, you can't just slide it out the door on the basis of culture; it is in the law of God.

Further in verse 35 he says "It is a shame for women to speak in the church." And the word *aischros* means it is ugly, it is a deformity. It is a deformity of God's intention; it is a perversion of beauty into ugliness.

Now, beloved, when I have told you again and again that the modern charismatic movement is Corinth all over again, do you see what I mean? It is at almost every point repeating the same errors of the Corinthian assembly.

Many women are excellent teachers, and they should be busy teaching other women. They should be doing that in the right place at the right time. But the right place and the right time is not the assembly of the church. I thank God for those gifted women who speak to women, who teach women, those godly women who teach the younger women, as Titus was told. But we must listen to God's standards; and there are reasons for that, that God may reveal the order.

You see, God has a plan. Husbands are to love and to lead; wives are to submit and respond. And God wants that order made visible, because it is an order out of His nature, and He wants His nature manifest in His church. And where that doesn't exist in His church, you have violated His order; you have violated His nature in terms of revealing it. You go into a church and hear a woman preacher, and believe me, God cannot be on display there simply because His nature and His plan and purpose are violated, even though the woman may say good things. She's supposed to go home and ask her husband.

Now, husbands, get some answers, will you. Some of the problems with women asking questions is because they have a husband going, "I don't know, I don't know. Ask me the score of the Dodgers for the last eight weeks, I could tell you. Ask me about the Bible, I don't know."

Now notice something very interesting in verse 35: "If they will learn any thing." This presupposes that some of the pretense under which the women were speaking up in the service was to ask questions; and they were blurting out their questions, which really was a confrontation with the prophet who was speaking. And they were interrupting this prophet on the pretense of having a question; when as so often is the case, people who have questions don't really have questions; they

just want to be heard. And so they were, in the pretense of asking a question, blurting out something, and they were messing up the order of the service.

Now I don't believe this is saying, "No time, no place can a woman ever ask a question." There are plenty of times in Bible studies and in fellowship together when we share; and it's proper when we have a question and answer time for anyone to ask a question, because that's the order of the time. But where you are in the service of the church, duly constituted as an act of worship before God, and when there is structure and order there for the edification of the whole body, it is to follow these patterns, and not to be interrupted and usurped by someone, even someone ostensibly asking a question. Apparently, from the passage, the only ones who had the right to do that were the prophets; and these women were usurping the place of a prophet who would be discerning what would be being said.

Now, if you don't have a husband, you can ask your father. And if your father doesn't know or you don't have a father, you can ask your brother. Or if not, you can ask somebody else who does know, but not in a public worship.

Can you imagine the poor prophet who tried to get up in Corinth and just get through his message, and everybody wanted to argue with him, seek the preeminence? Paul is really strong about this thing on women and tongues and prophecy. So strong, look at verse 36: "You want to argue about this? "What? Did you write the Word of God? Or did it just come to you? Are you some kind of law unto yourselves? You going to argue with me on this?" He doesn't say it's a cultural issue; he says it's the Word of God. This is very sarcastic. Whew. He's saying, "Did you write the Bible?"

See, you are either – listen to this – you are either the one who wrote it, or you are required to submit to it, that's all. So if you didn't write it, obey it. Now if you're not going to obey it, maybe you wrote it. Maybe it doesn't apply to you; it's just for everybody else.

"You think you have a monopoly on Scripture?" That's what he's saying. "Did it just come to you or from you? You got some special dispensation? If not, if the same Scripture applies to you that applies to everybody else, the same Scripture authored by God, then you have one response: obey." And I'm telling you, boy, he really calls a halt to all their activity, doesn't he. "Let's make it edify."

Well, lastly, he closes very briefly with some words for everybody, everybody. Verse 37, the procedure for everybody, for all, he says: "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual," – and I think spiritual here refers to the gift of tongues, because that's the sum of what he's saying – "if any of you think you have the gift of prophesying or if any of you think you have the gift of tongues, then let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."

Boy, what a great closing statement. I mean, that statement is the coup de grace. That gets closure on the whole argument. You know why? He says this: "Look, if the gift is legitimate, they will acknowledge that I speak the Word of God; and if they acknowledge that I speak the Word of God, they will bring that gift into submission to the principles I've just spoken. Now if they don't, it isn't the true gift." You see that?

If you go somewhere and they don't do it by two or three, and they don't do it in order, and it isn't interpreted, and prophets don't speak in this manner, et cetera, et cetera, believe me, they do not

acknowledge this as the Word of God; and if they don't, then they're not legitimate. So Paul really lays it down. It's one of the greatest claims Paul ever made to being inspired by God: "The things that I write are the commandments of the Lord."

I always remember the man who believed only the red letters of the Bible. He had a red letter Bible. I've never liked a red letter Bible since. He said, "Only the red letters are the words of Jesus." I said, "The words of Paul are just as important as the words of Jesus," and I showed him this text: "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Don't you ever try to pass away Paul.

"Well, it's only cultural. Women don't have to be silent; women can do what they want, women can preach, women can so forth and so forth. We don't have to listen to all these different things about tongues today and prophesying today, because this is just Corinth." No, no, no, these are God's commandments.

Now he says, "There are going to be some people who are going to ignore my commandments;" – verse 38 – "and if any," – this is the way it literally said, I'll give you just the meaning of it – "if anybody ignores these, you ignore him. In other words, he doesn't have the true gift. If he doesn't recognize that this is the Word of God, then he can't be recognized as having the true gift," – see, that's literally what it says – "and you ought to ostracize him and shut him up because he's a phony. If he doesn't obey these principles and acknowledge them as the commandments of God, then he is to be rejected." So he really sets them in order.

And then he summarizes everything, verse 39-40: "Wherefore, brethren," – or therefore, on the basis of all this – "zealously desire to prophesy." Why? Why? Verse 3 – remember? – because prophecy speaks edification, exhortation, comfort. "Oh, zealously see that those with the gift of prophecy will speak."

Now, he says, "Don't forbid to speak in tongues." In other words, he says, "For this time and this age there is a true gift of languages." – again, in the plural – "There is the true languages, there is the true gift. And I'm not saying you should forbid the true gift in its true expression at its true time." That's not referring to today, of course, because the gift has ceased. But in that time he says, "I recognize the true gift and I'm not forbidding it; it has its place. But, oh, when you come together, seek to prophesy."

But then summing it up – and here's this great truth again: "Let all things be done" – all things, all things – "decently." That is a word that means beauty. Beauty is a word that means harmony; and harmony has to do with the way everything fits together. "Let it all be done in beauty and in order." Sequence. God is a God of harmony and beauty. God is a God where everything fits together. And God is a God of order, system, order. He says, "Let your service manifest God."

I hope you see God here. I hope you see God in the beauty of the music, in the symmetry of the notes, in the beauty of the message as it flows in order to edify. That's what the church is to do that God may be manifest. And as God is manifest and the church is edified, the church will also be multiplied. That's God's promise. Let's pray.

Thank You, Father, for our fellowship this morning, for speaking so clearly from Your Word. Help us

to be the kind of church that does things in beauty and symmetry, that You may be made manifest as a God, not of confusion, but of peace. Help us never to be in disorder. Help us never to be fighting each other for preeminence, but at peace, so that Your very beauty and holiness and majesty and order and wisdom is manifest in our simple human effort. May we give to You the dignity that Your nature deserves. We praise You in Jesus' name. Amen.

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